

KBSNA sessions to be held at AAR/SBL Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Nov. 22-23

Again this November there will be two sessions sponsored by the Karl Barth Society in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature in New Orleans.

The first session will be on Friday afternoon, November 22, with a second session on Saturday morning, November 23.

INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE KARL BARTH SOCIETY

All who are interested are invited to join the Karl Barth Society of North America.

To become a member of the Barth Society, send your name, address, and annual dues of \$10.00 (payable to "Karl Barth Society") to:

Professor Russell Palmer
Dept. of Philosophy and Religion
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, NE 68182-0265

Members whose dues were last paid prior to November 1995 are urged to send in their annual renewal.

Center for Barth Studies

Both Yale University and Princeton Theological Seminary have indicated definite interest in being the host institution for the proposed Center for Barth Studies (see *KBS Newsletter*, Fall 1995). Both have requested additional time to prepare their detailed proposals, and the KBSNA Executive has agreed to their requests.

Last year, Prof. Stephen Crocco, Director of the Library at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, drew up a preliminary plan for such a center, which would promote the discussion of Barth's theology and act as a clearing-house for Barth scholarship. It would collect copies of all publications and other materials dealing with Barth, provide services for scholars doing research on Karl Barth, and maintain a Barth homepage on the internet.

The Friday afternoon session will be held in the Marriott Hotel, Balcony I, from 3:45 to 6:15 p.m. The program will feature a panel discussion on "The Question of Suffering in the Life of Sanctification and Its Relation to Feminist Criticism." The panel will include **Ellen T. Charry** (Perkins School of Theology), **Kathryn Greene-McCreight** (Yale University), and **A. Katherine Grieb** (Protestant Episcopal Seminary in Virginia). Those planning to attend are encouraged to read in advance *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, §66 "The Sanctification of the Human Being," parts 5 ("The Praise of Works") and 6 ("The Dignity of the Cross").

The Saturday morning session will be held in the Williams Room of the Sheraton Hotel from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. Last year's Saturday meeting was devoted to informal discussion with Bruce McCormack concerning his book, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*. Those present seemed pleased at the way the session became a sort of theological workshop. For this year's program, **Katherine Sonderegger** (Middlebury College) has consented to be present for a discussion of her book, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew: Karl Barth's "Doctrine of Israel"* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). **Kendall Soulen** (Wesley Theological Seminary), author of *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Augsburg Fortress, 1966), will offer a brief response to Prof. Sonderegger's book, followed by open discussion. Those planning to attend are urged to brush up on the book beforehand.

The AAR/SBL Annual Meeting officially begins on Saturday afternoon. The KBSNA sessions are listed as AM20 and AM50 in the "Additional Meetings" section of the 1996 AAR/SBL program book.

Barth Conference held in Philadelphia

The Ethics of Difference: Gender, Family, Race

"The Ethics of Difference: Gender, Family, and Race in Barth's Theology" was the theme of a Karl Barth Society conference held June 20-21, 1996, at Eastern Baptist Seminary in Philadelphia.

Trevor Hart

Opening the conference on Thursday afternoon was Trevor Hart, Professor of Divinity at St. Mary's College in the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Prof. Hart presented a paper entitled, "Mapping the Moral Field and Mediating the Promise: a Study in Karl Barth's Ethics."

The speaker had been asked both to orientate the conference's subsequent discussion by sketching the wider landscape of Barth's theological ethics, and to say something in particular about Barth's treatment of the parent-child relation in *Church Dogmatics* §54. This Herculean task was tackled under five headings as follows:

1. **Mapping the moral field.** Ethics, as "an attempt to answer theoretically the question of what may be called good human action" (CD IV/4, *The Christian Life*, 3) addresses a concern which is basic to human self-understanding. "What ought I or we to do?" is the question which haunts every individual and culture. The Christian approach to answering it, however, is and must ever be distinctive, being rooted in a particular construal of the moral space within which human agency occurs. Good human action is action which, as it were, fits within the moral space constituted by God in Christ and revealed in the gospel. Theological ethics is confronted with this fact and must assume the mode of witness rather than independent investigation of the moral possibilities.

2. **The kingdom in our midst: an objective matrix for responsible action.** Humans exist (and act) as those concerning whom a decision has been made. God has elected himself to be the God who is for us. This is "of all words that can be said or heard ... the best" (CD II/2, 3) but it leads directly to the ethical problem. Election brings with it responsibility. The gospel is inseparable from a law which stands over against us as demand. But law arises only within the context of grace, and at its heart is mysteriously indicative as well as imperative. "You shall be my people," "you shall be perfect" are words of promise. This promise is fulfilled in the person whose identity spans both sides of the covenant relation and secures the establishment of the kingdom, the

dynamics of hypostatic union and atonement being fused together, God with us and (in the person of our *Stellvertreter*) we with God. Christ fulfills the covenant from both sides. "You shall be" has thus become "you are" through our union with him, but for that very reason is all the more pressing as "you shall be."

3. **Divine command as creative event.** The command of God cuts into our present as a dynamic event. Moral casuistry misconstrues the actual circumstances surrounding human action. Responsible action does not consist in the manipulation of a cold and fossilized moral deposit, but rather in being summoned to an appropriate response by a speaking of God here and now to particular agents in particular circumstances. Nigel Biggar's sympathetic but critical attempt to rehabilitate the language of "system" fails to address the vital point in a manner reminiscent of Brunner. For Barth human moral agents are created and sustained entirely by the dynamic command of God within a continuing history between two subjects. There can be no room for any *independent* moral reflection or response apart from this history (not even the tiniest amount carried within an "open" system). *Homo peccator* becomes *capax verbi Dei* here as elsewhere only as the *Verbum Dei* speaks and is heard.

4. **Moral space as limited space.** The "moral ontology" which flows from the gospel of grace is one in which human freedom is exercised within fixed limits. Yet human freedom is exercised. Not freedom of a libertarian sort, but genuine freedom within limits which bestow upon our actions moral shape and direction. Grace does not overwhelm our actions thereby rendering them morally nugatory. It is precisely our free and obedient response which God desires, "that out of man's life there should come a repetition, an analogy, a parallel to His own being" (CD II/2, 276). If God does not find but must create a covenant partner from among the fallen race, nonetheless this creative activity is one in which genuine freedom and responsibility are undergirded and established rather than undermined. The paradox of grace is precisely that it both liberates and binds us in the very same moment. "It is as He makes Himself responsible for man that God makes man, too, responsible" (CD II/2, 511).

5. **Mediating the promise.** Human agents are constituted in part by their relatedness to God and other persons through Jesus Christ. The relation between parent and child is the most basic of human relationships (we are all participants in such a relationship from our conception onwards) and exemplifies the given objectivity of our location within the moral-ontological web. We do not choose our

parents; yet we are necessarily related to them, and who they are towards us shapes our own identity in a significant manner. The real meaning of parenthood is in fact not biological, but has to do with the nurturing of a new generation of those who live within and out of the resources of the boundaries of the promise. Parents are links in a chain of transmission. Children are their apprentices within the tradition of the gospel. "It is the parents' responsibility to give their children the opportunity to encounter the God who is present, operative and revealed in Jesus Christ, to know Him, and to learn to love and fear Him" (CD III/4, 283). Thus parents are charged with the responsibility of mediating the promise of grace by a particular means, mapping the moral space by indwelling it responsibly themselves and thereby helping the next generation of the community of faith to do so for itself.

Elouise Renich Fraser

Elouise Renich Fraser, Professor of Theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, spoke next on "What's Wrong with This Picture?" examining Barth's argument for the irreversible priority of male before female as part of his larger discussion of the theological meaning of our humanity in *Church Dogmatics* III/2.

The first part summarized four features of Barth's narrative theological approach to the doctrine of humanity: commitment to the primacy of a theological perspective; attention to biblical narrative when describing theological concepts or relational paradigms; use of a network of models and concepts; and appeals to commonly shared knowledge of maleness and femaleness as well as interpersonal relationships.

The second part of the paper examined Barth's larger discussion by mapping out his network of models and concepts which function as interpretive keys to Scripture and as organizing centers for his position. The analysis began with Barth's Christological foundation and included both his theological and anthropological definitions of humanity. This set the stage for a theological assessment of his argument for irreversible male priority and for a constructive response.

Prof. Renich Fraser argued that Barth's own theological definition of humanity calls into question in two ways his insistence on the irreversible priority of males. First, it implies that all humans stand in solidarity before God—equally needy, and equally capable of relationship with God. Yet Barth doesn't draw out the implications of this solidarity for our relationships with each other. Second, it demonstrates that irreversible priority has but one theologically justifiable context—divine grace. The irreversible priority of God emerges from the story of

God with us. There is no similar story of gracious male initiative on behalf of females.

In his anthropological definition of humanity, Prof. Renich Fraser claimed, Barth makes a subtle shift in his Christological point of reference. He shifts from his stated intention to reflect on the humanity of Jesus as an individual in relation to God and others, to reflection on Jesus as Lord of his community. The shift comes in the second part of his anthropological definition of humanity, when Barth moves from the basic form of humanity as cohumanity, to the concrete form of humanity as male-female, most fully realizable in husband-wife relationships. From this point on, Barth uses Jesus as the point of reference for males (primarily I), and the church as point of reference for females (primarily Thou).

In Renich Fraser's view, several problems are related to this shift in Christological focus. First, Barth's description of Jesus' humanity is incomplete. Second, his descriptions of the man and of the woman are one-sided. Third, Barth makes marriage paradigmatic for all human relationships, either directly or indirectly. Fourth, Barth's use of Scripture is inconsistent with his announced intention of focusing on Jesus as an individual human being. Finally, Barth compromises the freedom of the image of God.

The final section of the paper suggested first a return to reflection on the Gospel narratives, following Barth's own understanding of Jesus as an individual. This clarifies the fullness of Jesus' humanity (both I and Thou), and the inner logic of the Gospel accounts as the priority of God and others (not the priority of males). Second, Barth's chief model for cohumanity (male-female as husband-wife) is replaced by the model of the neighbor as developed by Barth in his reflection on Luke's parable of the Samaritan (CD I/2, 401-454). Jesus is the truly good Samaritan, whose counterpart is the compassionate neighbor, a passing and necessary reminder of God who doesn't abandon us in this world. In conclusion, Renich Fraser suggested several ways this would impact on Barth's network of models and concepts and the way we relate to each other as particular men, particular women, and particular children in need of neighbors both male and female.

At the banquet that evening, attendees were assigned to one of three tables for round-table discussion with one of the conference's presenters. At the tables the presenter was asked to present two questions to the participants at the table which followed on from his or her paper. This opened up a number of spirited and informative discussions, allowing opportunities for everyone to contribute and participate and broadening the input on the conference theme. Following that discussion, each table was asked to formulate one question for each of

the other two presenters and a representative was assigned each table to keep track of both the discussion and the formulation of the questions.

Noel Leo Erskine

The next morning, Noel Leo Erskine, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, presented the final paper on "Black Theology and Karl Barth's Dogmatics."

Prof. Erskine began by noting that for both Black Theology and Karl Barth's approach to theology, theology is a function of the church. Barth states categorically that dogmatics is impossible outside the church. Black theologians insist that theology may not be separated from the community it represents. So we could say that for both approaches the church is the home of theology.

The church for Black theology is the community of the oppressed which joins Christ in his fight for the liberation of humanity. There is a profound sense in which, for Black theologians, to be in the church is to be in solidarity with the community of the oppressed. So the church is identified with the community of the oppressed, and Jesus Christ the oppressed one is the point of departure for talk about this church. Jesus Christ is the essence of the church. Black theology centers on Jesus Christ. In sermon, song, testimony, and prayer Jesus is the one to whom the people turn both in times of happiness and distress. He is called the lily of the valley, the bright and morning star.

To be in the church for Barth is to be called upon with others by Jesus Christ. This definition seems to transcend the bifurcation between oppressors and oppressed. To be in the church then has to do primarily with God's choice and not ours. God chooses whom God pleases, oppressors and oppressed. So we could say that for Barth there is hope also for the oppressors.

According to Erskine, both approaches highlight liberation as the hermeneutical key. It is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that provides the clue to the liberation of humanity from oppression. What is at stake for Karl Barth is heresy concerning the nature of humanity. Humanity needs to be liberated from the false image of self. There is false teaching concerning the image of the self not only in the world but also in the church. This false teaching in the church creates a conflict between faith and heresy. Hence the very faith is in danger of being held captive in the church. What is needed is for the Word of God to be set free in the church.

"There is no theologian on the American scene who sets off the alarm regarding heresy concerning the nature of humanity as James Cone, the father of Black theology," Erskine said. "We are constantly reminded by him of our need to condemn falsehood about humanity, just as many dwellings today need to be

condemned because they create inhuman living conditions."

The conference concluded with a panel discussion involving the three presenters and the designated representative from each of the three round-tables from the evening before. Each representative provided a synopsis of their discussion and then followed up by asking the questions that were formulated by the people at the table addressing them to the other two presenters. What followed was an hour and a half of clarification and expansion on the main themes of the conference and excellent interaction with all of the participants.

From the response of the majority of the people at the conference, this was clearly a very exciting topic, with outstanding presentations and a format which encouraged interaction at a number of different levels allowing every participant in the conference to be directly involved and to benefit from the experience. The context of the presentations and the spirit in which questions were asked and answers given provided an open, warm, inviting and yet, very candid and frank format for some very serious discussion of Barth's theology and its ethical implications in these three areas.

The attendance at the conference was down somewhat from previous summer conferences which was both an advantage and a concern. The advantage was the intimacy of the setting which enhanced the spirit of the conference and its overall quality. The smaller attendance is a concern, however, as the Karl Barth Society of North America seeks to make this annual summer conference a key activity each year.

"Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary wishes to thank the Karl Barth Society of North America for giving it the opportunity to host this conference," said Scott Rodin, Eastern Seminary Vice President. "We were pleased with the quality and content of the program and feel it well represented and served the objectives of the society." He extended special thanks to the Advancement Department staff at the seminary for the extra work they put in to make the conference run smoothly and to keep costs to a minimum.

Barth Conference held in St. Paul

The Necessary "No!" and the Indispensable "Yes!"

"The Necessary 'No!' and the Indispensable 'Yes!'—Theological Controversy, Christology, and the Mission of the Church Today" was the theme of a conference held June 22-24, 1996, at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. This was the seventh biennial conference on the theology of Karl Barth sponsored by

the Institute for Mission in the U.S.A. of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, directed by Wayne Stumme.

Speakers included noted Barth scholars George Hunsinger, Bruce McCormack, Katherine Sonderegger, and John Webster, as well as Lutheran theologians Gerhard Forde, Lois Malcolm, Thelma McGill-Cobbler, and David Yeago.

John Webster, calling *Church Dogmatics* IV/3 "Barth's last great literary masterpiece," noted that its treatment of the prophetic office of Christ (the glorious self-disclosure of the Mediator, in which reconciliation declares itself as a reality) has had very little impact on theology, indeed it has yet to win an audience.

Instead of positing a disjunction between the accomplishment of reconciliation and its application, or between reconciliation and its communication, Barth takes a different tack. What most theologies see as a subsequent step is located by Barth within the person and work of Christ. In Christ, God sets among us an act that speaks for itself. The prophetic office of Christ becomes for Barth not only the teaching of Christ (as traditionally) but his reconciling work in its self-communicating character—including its completion in the realm of human subjectivity.

Webster called attention to Barth's position that the gospel is its own principle of explanation. The way Christ is present, uncontrollably alive, so that his presence is a function of his identity, counters the implicit denial of the resurrection in much modern theology. Only if we start with the risen presence of Jesus as a given, a theological axiom, can we then ask about the event of the resurrection (in terms of what happened).

Audio or videotapes of the presentations are available from Pastor Norman Wegmeyer, 1522 S. Roosevelt, Columbus OH 43209.

Double Review:

THE HASTENING THAT WAITS. By Nigel Biggar. Oxford University Press, 1993.

BARTH'S ETHICS OF RECONCILIATION. By John Webster. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Reviewed by Paul D. Matheny

The recent resurgence of interest in the theology and life of Karl Barth has led to new efforts to understand him that seek to free themselves from the reaction to Barth during his lifetime. A reevaluation is emerging. The original reception of Barth's thought in the English-speaking world was influenced by factors that led to the premature dismissal of Barth's work. It was believed, by many, that Barth refused to take seriously the reality of human struggle and modern

experience. Some still categorize Barth as merely a representative of neo-orthodoxy. They are quick to relegate Barth to the past and believe that Barth was too insulated within traditional Christian dogmatism to even consider the questions of contemporary Christian life. One has only to think of the influential response of Langdon Gilkey and David Tracy, who still characterize Barth as fostering a crude separation of the church and the world.

There are many reasons for this rather lame response to Barth's thought. Two recent books hope to help us discover the Barth that we have missed and to counter the impact of this response: Nigel Biggar's *The Hastening that Waits* and John Webster's *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*. Both argue that misunderstandings of Barth's thought can be traced to the neglect of his ethical thought. Another book seeking to accomplish the same task in a similar way is my dissertation, *Dogmatics and Ethics*.

As one might expect, I would like to use this opportunity to publicly reflect upon the significance of these publications for Barth studies as a whole. This article will be an introduction to an extended review of the books by Biggar and Webster. It will give an account of what they believe has been missed and then offers a shortened and critical version of their respective readings of Barth's mature thought. It is my belief that their publication marks a turning point in Barth studies that must not be missed, if we are to be fair to Barth and if we are not to miss the chance again of gleaning from his thought help as we seek to be the church during times like these.

Let us first turn to Biggar's *The Hastening that Waits*. The very reason for his book, states Biggar, is the neglect of Barth's ethical thought. It is wrong to accept the reputation that Barth holds in the English-speaking world. Barth does not devalue human ethical reflection and life. Biggar's purpose is to counter this bias. Barth is often assumed to hold positions that he does not hold. He does not espouse an ethical dogmatism. He does not devalue human experience, displacing it with divine revelation. He does not render human action superfluous by giving priority to divine action. Human agency does not dissolve into divine agency within the moral field.

The aim of Biggar's work is also to offer a fresh reading of Barth in the light of the new resources now available to English-speaking readers. This implies that the new resources offer us something new to chew on that we had not had the opportunity to see before. Concentrating on this material Biggar is wont to make the point that Barth is much more than his reputation would endure. In this he does well. Although one has to say that we certainly had plenty to chew on before these works became available, it is certainly true that the ethical material that has come to light since Willis' book in the early 1970s is very revealing.

Biggar's account has three stages. It begins by (1) asking the question of how hearing a command of God relates to human ethical reflection (general ethics). It proceeds to (2) offer Barth's exposition of the existential context of the moral field (special ethics). It ends with (3) a prolonged exploration of the sources of theological ethics according to the mature Barth. The sources are (a) Scripture, (b) the Church, and (c) the world. Biggar's reading remains very close to his conception of the order of Barth's ethical thought as presented within the *Church Dogmatics*. It is this decision that offers some of the strengths and weaknesses. His precision is sometimes surgical.

The overriding concern of Biggar's treatment is Barth's concept of the freedom of the human agent. It is this, he believes, that has stood in the way of our true appreciation of Barth's contribution to contemporary theology. He hopes to offer us a more nuanced and complete account. This effort provides us some of the most interesting insights and observations which Biggar has to offer. The success of this book depends on how convinced you are. I must admit from the start that I am more convinced by Barth than by Biggar.

Biggar's new reading of Barth will argue that Barth is recommending a way of life that is akin to the search for eudaimonia, or "the happiness or joy of living the kind of life for which one is specifically fitted." In short the Christian life, when lived according to God's Word, is a life of "glad freedom." His is certainly a very fresh and stimulating reading of Barth's ethics, but whether it is as full as Biggar claims is left to be demonstrated.

Webster's book takes a less surgical approach. In my opinion, he is able to provide a fuller account of the strength and profundity of Barth's contribution for theology, for this reason.

John Webster's *Barth's Ethics Of Reconciliation* is a very bold book. He argues on every page that the ethics of Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is not merely incidental to, but intrinsic to the design of the whole. Barth's church dogmatics is "moral ontology." It is a theological account of moral life that gives priority to divine action and, at the same time, takes with ultimate seriousness the authenticity of human freedom and ethical action.

Arguing along a line very similar to Biggar, Webster claims that this is missed by most readings of Barth's *Dogmatics*. Quickly, he departs from Biggar's more guarded and timid approach. How are we then to approach Barth's *Dogmatics*? "[B]y bearing in mind three characteristics of his argument, all of which are interdependent, and no single one of which can stand on its own without twisting the design of the whole." These are: "(1) the *Church Dogmatics* as a whole is one lengthy exposition of the statement... 'God is'.... (2) Because—and only because—it is an exposition of the

statement 'God is,' the *Church Dogmatics* is also all along the line an anthropology... (3) Because the theme of the *Church Dogmatics* is this God in covenant with humanity, the *Dogmatics* is intrinsically an ethical dogmatics, and includes description of the human covenant partner as agent." The rest of the book is a thorough and rigorous exposition and defense of this bold argument.

Webster's reading leads to a very different picture of the Christian life. The Christian does not seek eudaimonia, as in Biggar's reading, but rather, the Christian becomes a rebel. The cause is the restoration of true humanity in opposition to any effort of self-divinization.

The contrast between Webster's reading and Biggar's reading is louder than it appears. The church mouse versus the disturber of the peace comes to mind. Yet there is a more profound consensus than meets the eye. In the next section of this review I will lay out the consensus that I see emerging, as well as discuss the important differences in their readings. Let me say at the outset that I hope you will be surprised and encouraged by both.

Paul Matheny (Dr.Theol., Heidelberg) is Senior Pastor of Westhampton Christian Church, Roanoke, Virginia. He is the author of *Dogmatics and Ethics: The Theological Realism of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Peter Lang, 1990), which was reviewed by George Hunsinger in the September 1991 issue of the Newsletter.

EDITOR'S NOTE: John Webster, who has been the Ramsay Armitage Professor of Systematic Theology at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, has returned to England to become Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.

THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN CALVIN. By Karl Barth. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995

Reviewed by Philip W. Butin

This volume makes available in English Karl Barth's 1922 lectures on Calvin. The lectures were delivered for four hours a week in the summer of 1922, while Barth was Honorary Professor of Reformed Theology in Göttingen.

In his Translator's Preface, Geoffrey Bromiley observes, "the wrestling of one theological giant with another can hardly fail to be exciting and instructive, no less and perhaps more so when they belong in general to the same theological and ecclesiastical tradition."

Although the lectures were first published in German in 1922 under the title *Die Theologie Calvins*

(Theologischer Verlag, Zürich), this English translation of the 1992 critical edition by Hans Scholl opens up Barth's appreciative and insightful wrestling with his Reformed mentor to a much wider audience.

Barth's growing number of English-speaking students will appreciate the rare privilege of learning along with him as he undertakes his first sustained and disciplined theological encounter—his first serious "wrestling"—with the man whom he considers to be the original synthesizer of the broadly Reformed tradition in which Barth himself stands.

In order to fully appreciate them, the lectures call for consideration from at least three angles: first, with respect to their contribution to Calvin studies; second, with regard to their contribution to our understanding of the sources and development of Barth's own thought; and third, with a view to the contribution of this "wrestling of one giant with another" to contemporary Reformed theological understanding.

American Calvin scholars are often more aware of the limitations than the strengths of 19th and early 20th century German Calvin scholarship. For this very reason, the careful documentation available in this critical version of Barth's 1922 Calvin lectures provides a welcome reminder of its remarkable rigor and its substantial contribution to our current understanding. Many who write about the Reformation and Calvin today in the belief that they have discovered "new insights" could benefit from the sobering discovery that these thoughts were commonplace in Germany more than a century ago.

Scholl's notes meticulously point out Barth's academic sources, and draw detailed attention both to his close interaction with and his dependence upon the leading concerns and conclusions of that scholarship. One example of the limitations this dependence places on Barth's treatment is his superficial discussion of the significance of the Caroli affair, which totally overlooks the implications of this incident for Calvin's developing trinitarian perspective on the divine-human relationship (309-317).

Still, what stands out almost eighty years later is Barth's occasional and remarkable ability, as a *theologian* with firm roots in the historical tradition (rather than a *historian* proper), to transcend the limitations of the historical scholarship on which he relied and break through to strikingly original yet remarkably convincing interpretations of perennial problems within Calvin studies. While his sweeping historical assertions are often open to qualification, occasionally they demonstrate an intuitive grasp of the heart of an issue that is too often lacking in more nuanced and recent treatments.

Of particular interest in this regard are his penetrating comments on the intimate interrelationship between the ideas of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin; his incisive discussion of Calvin's ecclesiology (including

his recognition that it provides the proper theological matrix for Calvin's doctrine of election); and his intuitive grasp of the crucial significance Calvin's discussion of Christian liberty in the 1536 *Institutes* had for the way church, daily life, politics, and the world were interrelated in the later Reformed tradition.

The question of the book's significance for Calvin scholarship may be intriguing, but it is probably not one of ultimate academic significance. Barth was not, and did not want to be, a "Calvin scholar" in the technical sense. On the other hand, these lectures contain much that is central to properly understanding Barth's own thought in its authentic traditional and historical theological context. For this reason, the 1922 Calvin lectures need to be taken with the utmost seriousness by contemporary "Barth scholars."

Too often, the seriousness and intentionality with which Barth immersed himself in the historical sources of both the broader Christian and the specifically Reformed traditions in the formative years just after the publication of the Romans commentaries is overlooked. In this particular case, his detailed and conscientious historical investigation into every minute twist and turn of Calvin's life does more than testify to his thoroughness as a scholar. More important, it demonstrates the seriousness with which Barth took Calvin's significance and influence, as well as the vivid interest with which he read and studied Calvin as he prepared his lectures. Barth can only be misunderstood if his thought is abstracted from its most authentic root in the Reformation in general, and Calvin and the Reformed tradition in particular, only to be approached and interpreted externally from the standpoint of some other tradition or agenda.

Luther's very strong influence on Barth's own thought during this period is clear in the lectures, and it opens Barth to a profound appreciation of Luther's parallel influence on the young Calvin; an appreciation which was uncommon in Barth's time and especially in his German context. At the same time, Barth's unique insight into and appreciation for Zwingli's theological concerns portends later developments in the former's eventual emphasis on divine freedom and in his later understanding of the sacraments. In fact, one gets the impression that in his stirring portrayal of Calvin as the "systematician" who alone could synthesize the unique insights of both Luther and Zwingli into a comprehensive and authentically Protestant theology and ethic, Barth's identification with Calvin is existential as well as traditional.

In the 1922 lectures, the center of Barth's interest in Calvin's thought is in the way the latter focuses the prior insights of Luther and Zwingli upon the active expression of the Christian life—ecclesially understood—in the world. Barth calls this more broadly the problem of ethics. He sees and

appreciates Calvin's keen awareness that "the world resists the gospel." "[Calvin] did not dream of any dramatic breakthrough or victory for his cause. His concern was to establish the most favorable possible conditions for the conflict." (111) Later, Barth admires this as Calvin's "realism," which he calls "the strong side of all Reformed ethics." (196) Reformed ethics thus requires both a clear acknowledgement of the boundary between the church and the world, and a clear understanding of the church's responsibility to live in faith and freedom in that world. "What [Calvin] really wanted deep in his heart was a church that can honor God in the world, a church that has the advantages of a sect without the disadvantages, a church that knows what it does and does not want, a church that knows its people...." (186) "Calvin, not Luther, made the Reformation capable of dealing with the world and history when he hammered the faith of Luther into obedience." (90)

In *The Theology of John Calvin*, Barth's detailed and profound wrestling with his Reformation mentor clarifies his own identity as a distinctively Reformed theologian. Barth scholars have always been impressed with the breadth of his ability to draw theologically from the whole scope of Christian tradition, as well as from diverse philosophical perspectives. What is evident in these lectures is that within this complex matrix, the ideas of the Reformation have privileged place. The influence of Luther and Zwingli is profound. But Barth sees Calvin uniquely among the Reformers, as "a new and third force" which

pressed the ideas of his predecessors to their final logic and into "a higher synthesis," such that Calvin's thought is "the last and ripest word of the Reformation." (91)

He certainly would not want to see himself as a "Calvinist." Neither—for the most part—does he paint Calvin as a "Barthian." Instead, he insists that "[b]eing taught by Calvin means entering into dialogue with him, with Calvin as the teacher and ourselves as the students, he speaking, we doing our best to follow him and then—this is the crux of the matter—making our own response to what he says." (4)

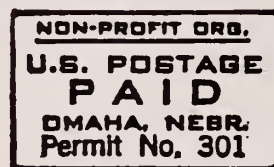
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